

# *rites of* **passage**



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## Preparing Youth for Social Change

by Susan Wilcox, Khary Lazarre-White, and Jason Warwin

In the late spring, four young women, 16 and 17 years of age, and the two leaders of their Brotherhood/Sister Sol chapter travel 25 miles outside New York City to wooded land protected by a Native American group that offers this natural sanctuary for reflection, prayer, cleansing, and respite from urban stresses. The young women and their immediate elders have become sister-friends over several years of bonding, learning, exploring together, and daring to trust each other. They choose a clearing just beyond a brook and over a narrow wooden footbridge where they lay down a blue, white, and gold cloth: the "Sister Sol fabric." They place atop it candles, a bundle of sage, framed Oaths of Dedication, and special objects the girls have selected to include in the ceremony: a photo, a piece of jewelry. Their ritual begins with the young sisters sitting on the fabric in a circle. Each reads her Oath of Dedication while the others listen closely, though they are familiar with each other's statements, having helped hone them over several weeks. The

chapter leaders sit outside this intimate circle. The rite-of-passage ceremony is centered on the young sisters who are declaring their dedications and offering support to each other to achieve them.

After reading their oaths, each sister walks alone to a place where she feels comfortable, taking whatever time she needs to silently reflect on the words she so carefully and purposefully wrote. When everyone has returned, the chapter leaders blindfold the girls and direct them to the footbridge they will walk across, one by one, using their own wits and agility. Although the bridge has a handrail, they are instructed not to touch it but to walk in the middle at their own pace. They are scared, some more so than others, not sure if they trust their physical judgment. One young sister cautiously steps along, another nearly runs across as if to complete the challenge as quickly as possible, but each makes it over in her own way. Once everyone is on the other side, the girls remove their blindfolds and share their thoughts about the entire process. The chapter leaders listen to their young sisters express their fears about both creating and celebrating their Oath of Dedication. The young women say their uncertainty was assuaged by the knowledge

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that their chapter leaders were there to guide them, not allowing them to hurt their bodies or spirits and believing in their ability even when they were not sure of themselves.

### Making Connections

The Brotherhood/Sister Sol helps young people develop into critical thinkers who are committed to themselves and to community change. In single-gender chapters throughout New York City, primarily in Washington Heights and Harlem, teenagers learn to embrace and embody the ideals of brotherhood and sisterhood and to appreciate their connections to each other, connections that supercede friendship, rivaling the ties of blood. A recent evaluation of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol (Castle & Arella, 2003) indicated that these ideals were being fostered, finding that both members and staff equated the organization to a family.

A culture of connection is promoted in different ways. For example, The Brotherhood/Sister Sol is led by the Directors' Circle (DC), a leadership team—consisting of the authors of this article and the Associate Director—that provides our organizational vision and echoes the underlying core ideals of the organization: community, collaboration, equity. The DC models collective and cooperative decision-making for the greater good of the organization. It brings together diverse ideas and talents, allows directors to have shared responsibility, and provides time for them to work directly with youth. Monday through Friday, at around 3:15 pm, the Harlem brownstone that serves as our headquarters begins to stir with the energy of young people. Staff know our focus will shift from paperwork to checking in with members who need

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assistance or someone with whom to talk. These informal interactions, seemingly ordinary moments, promote reciprocal concern and demonstrate every day how much elders care about the young people.

With the ideals of brotherhood and sisterhood as a foundation, our members are empowered to make constructive choices about their lives, choices that

consider the people around them. Some may choose to dedicate themselves to community service or organizing, others may become less activists than people with clear career goals or good parents who understands their role in sustaining strong communities. Because of the challenging conditions many of our members face each day—underfunded schools, poor housing, limited job opportunities—all manners of “giving back” are necessary and meaningful. As we go about helping our members realize their individual potential and that of their communities, we use ritual and ceremony to mark and celebrate their accomplishments and growth.

### Rites of Passage

Whether in a *quinceañera* for a Puerto Rican girl, nubility rites for a Ghanaian girl, or a *bar* or *bat mitzvah* for a Jewish boy or girl, transition from childhood into adulthood is publicly recognized and feted around the world through ceremonies initiating children into the responsibilities and expectations of adulthood. These rites are as intensely personal as they are communal; individuals go through a self-transformation with support from their family, peers, and community.

Brotherhood/Sister Sol celebrations echo the traditions found in different cultures, in particular rituals of people from the African Diaspora. Through the ceremonies, our members, Black and Latino youth from the Lower East Side to the Bronx—Black American, Jamaican, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Haitian, Honduran, Ghanaian—reflect on their familial traditions by learning about age-old practices. For example, we have our members stand or sit in a circle representing an unbroken chain, continuity, and equality (since no one can be at the head).

Sometimes we include a physical challenge that, when met, gives the young people evidence of their capabilities. We ask our members to give their oath, which the group

collectively and formally accepts; we use candles, silence, and drumming to convey the solemnity of the act and to promote self-reflection. Our members also help shape the ceremonies by contributing their own words and offering ideas about what should take place. The diversity of our members also enhances the ceremonies (and our programming overall) because,

in sharing aspects of their culture, they expand each other's knowledge about their commonalities and differences and learn that the African Diaspora is far-reaching, rich, and varied. One of our few members of Indian descent remarked that she has become more interested in learning about her culture by seeing how empowering it is for Blacks and Latinos to learn about theirs.

The experience of celebrating collective and individual achievement reinforces bonds among our members, deepening their appreciation of brotherhood and sisterhood. It also underscores the seriousness of their words and deeds, joins them to their elders by making clear the responsibilities and expectations of adulthood, and builds their confidence by highlighting their success. A new Sister Sol chapter was initiated during a Sister Sol retreat. The initiation ceremony stood out among the week's activities for several members, one of whom said, "It was so beautiful; the fact that these young girls wanted to be part of this bigger group made me proud and happy." Describing the significance of rites of passage, Somé (1998) discusses their personal and public implications:

Whether they are raised in indigenous or modern cultures, there are two things that people crave: the full realization of their innate gifts, and to have these gifts approved, acknowledged, and confirmed . . . This implies that our own authority needs the fuel of external recognition to inspire us to fulfill our life's purpose. (p. 27)

With such social trends as an increased opportunity to participate in higher education, marriage coming later in life, and the high cost of housing, the important life changes that signify a person moving from childhood to adulthood (Feldman & Elliott, 1990) are less pronounced. Young people may therefore not receive public recognition and approval of their accomplishments and "innate gifts," acknowledgments that promote the sense of self-empowerment of which Somé speaks. The leaders of Brotherhood/Sister Sol think it is crucial to help youth to grasp the significance of becoming a man or woman in order to help our members negotiate this all-important transition while they envision a world in which they want to live. In their words, from their Oaths of Dedication:

I am a woman who stands for peace, equality, strength, respect and the ability to just be me.

(Kewanna Ross, EleLoLi: The Pages Sister Sol Chapter)

From this day on I dedicate myself to this oath to achieve my goals and perfect my weaknesses. I will always strive to do my best and be the best I can. I will live up to my word! (Bryan Frans, Invincible/Untouchable Brotherhood Chapter)

### A Comprehensive Program for Developing Young Leaders

**B**efore our members can celebrate their achievements, they must first realize them. This process is ignited in different ways in each of the five programs we conduct and continues as our members move on to college, work, and raising families.

1. The Brotherhood/Sister Sol Development Program (BSDP) is described in this article. BSDP members also participate in the other programs listed below.
2. The After School Program for students ages 7–21 takes place each weekday at our brownstone, where we offer enrichment activities, mentoring, and academic assistance. We also facilitate Youth Council, a leadership group comprising members from our various programs; Lyrical Circle, a collective that writes positive and reflective poetry and spoken word; and Young Sisters and Young Brothers groups, which introduce our youngest members to the BSDP model.
3. The Liberation Program prepares a cadre of youth activists during the annual Summer Liberation School, where they learn about local and global social movements and the strategies and struggles to implement them. They then create and implement organizing campaigns.
4. The Summer Leadership Program engages our members and community residents in our International Study in Africa and Latin America, Summer Day Camp, and Youth Employment and Opportunity Program (a job training and internship program).
5. The Community Outreach Program allows us to connect and work cooperatively with youth, parents, educators, community activists, and community-based organizations toward our common goal of youth and community empowerment. Members and staff give presentations and facilitate work-

shops; we also maintain The Grapevine, a vast database of youth-serving organizations, and publish *Reality Check*, a bilingual newsletter.

Together our five programs encompass a holistic and comprehensive approach to youth development: In varying degrees, each of our programs infuses values of brotherhood and sisterhood that are the crux of our rites-of-passage programming. Members of our BSDP, however, go through the most intense and prolonged exploration of self in relation to historical, cultural and social issues.

### **Moving toward Adulthood in the Brotherhood/Sister Sol Development Program**

The Brotherhood/Sister Sol Development Program establishes single-gender chapters at public secondary schools, working with youth over the course of their high school careers. Chapters are facilitated by two chapter leaders: skilled and dedicated young professionals who serve on a full-time basis as mentors, teachers, confidants, role models, and friends, and who are the link among members, schools, parents, and The Brotherhood/Sister Sol. Before being hired, chapter leaders go through an intensive screening process in which their ideas about education, race, gender, class, and other salient issues are explored. They demonstrate their facilitation skills and rapport with young people by conducting a workshop on a topic of their choosing, which allows members to assess the candidate.

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The BSDP helps young people build authentic relationships within and across genders while providing them with a space where they can openly explore and share, undistracted by the opposite gender. Chapters are designed to promote open exchange and strong group identity so that members see themselves as a collective of individuals, all with a positive self-image, who learn with and support each other. Feldman and Elliott (1990) recognize how important peer relationships are during adolescence and, accordingly, the value of exposing young people to positive peer pressure.

Chapters consist of 10–20 youth in the same grade or two consecutive grades, beginning with the youngest grade in the school. They include youth who excel in school and those on the verge of dropping out, youth who have contact with only one parent and those from two-parent households. As chapter members move up in grade, chapters leaders stay with them through their graduation from high school and beyond. By partnering with schools—the common ground where youth, families, and educators come together—The Brotherhood/Sister Sol envelopes young people in a web of support necessary to building healthy and whole lives. For example, chapter leaders attend parent-teacher meetings, serve on exhibition committees, mediate conflict, and generally provide an outside perspective. We intentionally work in small schools because they offer flexible scheduling; student-centered, collaborative, and interactive approaches to youth development and curriculum; and easy access to their staff.

#### **Program Processes**

The BSDP has three components: brotherhood/sisterhood building, critical thinking/knowledge of self/global awareness, and rites of passage.

#### *Brotherhood/Sisterhood Building*

Developing a strong chapter begins with creating an environment that fosters honest exchange; the success of a chapter depends on developing and maintaining trust and respect among a group of young people and their chapter leaders. Chapters meet once a week for approximately two hours. Icebreakers, games, field

trips, writing, and discussion help members explore issues of trust, respect, and leadership. The chapter comes up with a collective mission statement; definitions for *woman/sister/leader* or *man/brother/leader*; and a chapter name. One Brotherhood chapter chose *Akoma*, an Ashanti word meaning *heart*, for their name. A Sister Sol chapter created the name *EleLoLi: The Pages*. *EleLoLi* stands for Elements of Love and Life; *Pages* refers to each member being a page in the chapter. The chapter name, statement, and definitions become the core values each member struggles to

achieve and the process by which they discover the power of brotherhood and sisterhood: unconditional love and support. Each year chapters review their words, reshaping them as their ideals mature. Some chapters initially created separate definitions for *man*, *brother*, and *leader*. They later merged the separate definitions into one, realizing that to be a man is to be a brother is to be a leader.

#### *Critical Thinking/Knowledge of Self/Global Awareness*

The ultimate goal of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol is to help youth develop the ability to analyze complex issues and make informed, sensitive decisions. These skills are essential if our members are to fully understand themselves and the world they have inherited. Each week members learn about and discuss topics from our 10-point curriculum:

1. Mind, Body, and Spirit
2. Leadership Development
3. Pan African and Latino History
4. Sexism and Misogyny
5. Sexual Education and Responsibility
6. Drugs and Substance Abuse
7. Conflict Resolution and Bias Reduction
8. Community Service and Responsibility
9. Political Education and Citizenship
10. Educational Achievement

Exposure to cultural events and conferences helps broaden members' worldview, wilderness retreats expose them to nature's beauty and tranquility, and college tours expand their knowledge of educational options. Members regularly reflect on diverse issues in writing. Publication of their work in *The Brotherhood Speaks* and *Voices of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol* enables them to see the effect of their words on others, again joining self-reflection to the public sphere.

#### *Rites of Passage*

The last phase of BSDP begins with an intensive process of analyzing self, community, and the world, culminating in the creation of an Oath of Dedication, a personal testimony of the beliefs, goals, and lifetime commitments each member will strive to live by. Those who complete the oath—which includes almost all of our members—take on a leadership role by facilitating sessions, recruiting and initiating new members, and guiding younger members.

The three components of the BSDP overlap. Bonding within the chapter and learning and reflecting on our 10 curriculum issues are ongoing processes. Elements of rites-of-passage activities also occur throughout, although they are most apparent in the process of creating a mission statement, the definitions, and an Oath of Dedication.

#### *Chapter Mission Statement and Definitions for Brother/Sister, Man/Woman, and Leader*

Many of the youth we work with are exposed from an early age to violence, drugs, poverty, misogyny, racism, and death, yet they are denied the supports *all* youth need. They are subjected in their communities and in the media to negative images of masculinity, in which men are expected to be "hard"; femininity, in which women are seen as sexual objects; and other identities, such as the notion that caring about school is not "being down." These messages potentially promote self-destructive behavior characterized by low educational achievement, criminal involvement, early pregnancy, gang banging, and joblessness. Creating a mission statement and definitions for brother/man/leader or sister/woman/leader helps our members to deconstruct messages they glean from society about who they are expected to be as women, men, sisters, brothers, and leaders, and to redefine these roles for themselves. The process of gaining consensus, including everyone's voice and considering possible contradictions takes time. Chapter members struggle with such questions as:

- If being a man means you have to support your family financially, are you no longer a man if you lose your job?
- Is motherhood or marriage a necessary aspect of being a woman?
- Does being a leader mean you need followers or people you influence?

Only after spending several weeks refining their statements and definitions do members feel ready to literally sign their name to them. Each mission statement and definition is unique, yet all express similar ideas about what comprises positive and healthy communities: respect, trust, tolerance. Where the mission statements articulate a global perspective, the definitions are more personal in speaking to specific human qualities such as strength, leadership, and intelligence. The statements are decisive and optimistic, actually flying

in the face of much of what our members are learning about and experiencing in their communities. Even knowing that the path to achieving their goals is multifaceted and long, our members maintain hope for a world that includes their values.

Every chapter's mission statement and definitions are hung around the mantle on the first floor of our brownstone. They are a tangible and daily reminder of the force of the crafted and affirmed declaration, reiterating to our members not only the commitments of their own chapters, but those of their brothers and sisters. The motivation to live up to their ideals is thus multiplied.

### **Oath of Dedication**

Brotherhood/Sister Sol members who have been learning together and involved in self-reflection for at least two years go on to write an Oath of Dedication. They are now able to identify what they personally stand for and to strive to achieve it. Completing an oath requires taking public ownership of their individual beliefs and aspirations. Chapter leaders introduce the activity to their members by setting a serious tone for the session, describing what an oath is and reviewing previous steps in the rites-of-passage process: statements, definitions, study of Brotherhood/Sister Sol curriculum issues, self-reflection, exposure to new experiences. Chapter leaders point out that they have not gone through this process. While many staff keep journals, writing an Oath of Dedication requires not only articulating one's future plans but also stating them to the world. Few adults have gone through this process. Chapter leaders let members know that they are being asked to complete a very difficult task, one the leaders too would have benefited from doing.

Members who are ready to write an oath then step forth. They draft oaths and bring them in to read to each other. Because they know each other well, they are able to offer constructive feedback and to point out an overlooked characteristic, perspective, or goal they know their sister or brother to have. They discuss the tone and flow of the oath. Chapter leaders work closely with each member, helping each one craft a statement he or she is proud of for both its content and its quality. This process continues for about three months until the oath is finalized. In a ceremony like that of the young sisters described earlier, each chapter then celebrates its accomplishment and commitments, and each member receives a framed Oath of Dedication.

### **Mission Statements**

#### *Knowledge of Self Brotherhood Chapter*

Our Mission in The Brotherhood is to be positive, to build confidence within each other, and to stand up for our brothers no matter what the situation. There is no racism in The Brotherhood. We respect each other's cultures and beliefs. We will achieve in school and reach our goals. We are not hypocrites in The Brotherhood. We will talk about issues in our community and seek to change our negative ways of thinking to positive. We will gain as much knowledge as we can because our power is in what we know: Knowledge of Self.

#### *Sol-Axé Sister Sol Chapter*

We are beautiful young women in every way. We are sisters no matter our ethnicity, culture, background, shape, or size. We retrieve our strength from our unity. In respecting our bodies and souls, we honor and cherish each other. Each of us has dreams and the ability to make them come true by setting goals each and every day. Love, trust, and acceptance form Sister Sol. We are the first and next generation of Sister Sol, leading the way for other sisters. My Sister, Myself.

### **Definitions**

#### *EleLoLi: The Pages Sister Sol Chapter*

A Sister, Woman, Leader is . . . proud of herself and is no one's object. She will rise together with other women, accept their differences and the ties that bind them as one. She knows how to love herself: defines, cares and can be there for herself. She helps others to understand who she is. She lets no one or nothing stand in the way of where she wants to go or who she wants to become. She will become the woman that other women look up to and admire.

#### *Akoma Brotherhood Chapter*

A Man, Brother, Leader is: persistent, patient, intelligent, aware of his surroundings, has self-respect and respects others, open minded and cares for others, confident, a positive role model, responsible, seeks to find his purpose in life, is cooperative, loyal and righteous, and is someone you can confide in.

An excerpt from an oath by Jose Lora of Invincible/Untouchable Brotherhood Chapter begins by articulating the significance of his transition from adolescent to adult. He recognizes the inherent struggles of growing up but is willing to make commitments about how he will approach his future.

#### *My Oath for Life and Peace*

There comes a time in the life of every person when they make the transition from a child to an adult. With this transition comes certain inevitable choices and struggles that one must go through, that determines their future. My struggle into manhood, although difficult and in progress, I have acknowledged and embraced. By realizing what I'm going through in my life and its significance to my future, I have entered a new light—an awakening.

Through this awakening I've been able to look at myself and figure out who I am. This awakening has led me to become a visionary. Not only can I see a future made by me, but a better future for others. I envision the life I want to live and how I can bring this vision into reality.

Carmen Constant of the Sol-Axé Sister Sol Chapter begins her oath with a poem that forcefully expresses her goals and motivations. Her essay elaborates on these perspectives.

I am committed to myself because I always  
put myself first in anything I do.  
I'm committed to my sisters, by helping them with  
any problem the best way I can.  
I am committed to learning and teaching my  
wisdom to others.  
I am committed to living my life in the right way,  
not how someone tells me to live.  
I am committed to setting goals everyday,  
and letting nothing stand in my way of  
accomplishing them.

An excerpt from the oath of Kendall Calyen of the Invincible/Untouchable Chapter indicates the influence The Brotherhood/Sister Sol has had on the development of his beliefs. Later on in his essay, Kendall mentions the struggles he faces but says that he believes his chapter's mission statement and definitions will guide him through life.

The Brotherhood/Sister Sol has helped me to develop many of my beliefs about how I should live my life.

I intend to use this paper as written proof of my beliefs. It is my oath to stay true to myself.

I believe that being there for your family is important, as is setting an example for others and getting as much knowledge as possible. I promise that I will never be violent, there is too much violence and I don't want to be another statistic or stereotype. I want people to see me as an intelligent Black male who is going somewhere in his life . . . Like everyone else I am not perfect and must work to achieve and overcome everything in my way. I hope to stay on course using my chapter's mission statement, and our definition of a brother, man, and leader. I realize how important it is to set example for those coming behind me.

Some oaths are stories or poems; most are more standard narratives. The oaths are a synthesis of our members' experiences in our rites-of-passage programming. In reflecting on his chapter's definitions, Kendall, currently a student at Antioch College, says, "This definition means to me that there is something I will live up to. It is something that came from my breath, something I believe in. It represents me."

#### **Toward Social Change**

**T**he Brotherhood/Sister Sol evaluation (Castle & Arella, 2003) showed that almost all of our members had either participated in or expressed an interest in doing community service or organizing. Their interests spanned from giving back to The Brotherhood/Sister Sol to organizing in their communities to undertaking service activities in Africa and Latin America. Our members include co-creators of award-winning community gardens as well as organizers who are working to turn an abandoned building in Harlem into a community space. They have taught English as a second language in the Dominican Republic and worked on a school construction project in Ghana. On returning home from our most recent overseas program, the group initiated two projects on their own: sending a box of school supplies to a *bateye* (a poor rural community) in the Dominican Republic and writing and disseminating a petition on behalf of a Viequense activist who is facing a 15-year prison sentence.

Current and alumni Brotherhood/Sister Sol members serve on our board of directors (two of whom were selected by their peers to represent them), and they volunteer in our various programs. Two alumni are full-time staff. On their high school and college campuses, our members are leaders who hold execu-

tive positions in student clubs and have founded new student initiatives. Many of our members are the first in their family to attend college though they did not expect to graduate from high school. Those who decided not go to college are raising their families. Young men are taking responsibility for their children though they may not have had a similar model to guide them as they were growing up, and young women are seeking to find their path or trying to bal-

Latina entitled to a better life? Was I influenced by my friends? Who was I? Who am I? Who will I become?" Following the attack of September 11, 2001, several Brotherhood members approached their chapter leaders and asked them for insight into why the attacks occurred. Their inquiry and desire for acquiring balanced understanding led two staff members to develop a three-part workshop on the topic. These examples, one quite personal and the other commu-

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ance the demands of motherhood with their dreams as women, critically aware of the challenges imposed on their gender by society.

Research on resiliency in children contends that when youth believe they have some control over their lives and environment, they also have healthy aspirations and are motivated to achieve (Werner & Smith, 1989). This motivation, Werner and Smith (1989) argue—when combined with programming that reinforces bonds between youth and elders and among peers—gives deeper meaning to young people's lives and a reason for being committed not just to oneself but to others. Roach, Yu, and Lewis-Charp (2001) note that youth require secure and stable environments and relationships “that provide nurturing, standards, guidance, as well as opportunities for trying new roles, mastering challenges and contributing to family and community” (p. 4). The Brotherhood/Sister Sol has *preventative* programming that offers a safe space for our members to join and learn together, but we also facilitate *proactive* programming that creates opportunities for them to reflect on their ideas, then display and utilize their skills and knowledge.

Paolo Freire says that when historically oppressed people move toward organizing for change, “This discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection: only then will it be praxis” (1997, p. 47). Beyond the litany of achievement, Brotherhood/Sister Sol members are showing signs of becoming thoughtful critical thinkers. Yomayra Caraballo, a Sister Sol member and currently a Hunter College student, asks herself: “Who was I three years ago? What were my views? Was I a

nity oriented, demonstrate that our members are becoming self-empowered by seeking to be articulate, knowledgeable, and proactive young people who give deep thought to the varied meanings of their experiences and aspirations.

The programming of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol basically speaks to the development of identity. Cotê (1996) notes that people are shaped by the historical, cultural, and diverse social institutions—schools, family, community centers—we encounter: The specificity of our historical and cultural inheritance forms the basis for self-definition and provides the tools for development. Regardless of where in the world we grow up, adolescence can be described as the greatest period of change in our lives, encompassing puberty, changes in self-concept and social relationships, and maturing cognitive functions (Carnegie Quarterly, 1990). Adolescents are rigorously working to define who they are, a process fraught with emotional and physical changes and challenges (Carnegie Quarterly, 1990). In a report by UNICEF, an organization that advocates and provides support for programming for children all around the world, adolescence is characterized as:

. . . one of life's fascinating and perhaps most complex stages, a time when young people take on new responsibilities and experiment with independence. They search for identity, learn to apply values acquired in childhood and develop skills that will help them become caring and responsible adults. (2002, p. 1)

The Brotherhood/Sister Sol works with youth throughout their adolescence to provide a consistent,

stabilizing influence in their lives when they most need it. While we do not expect to turn out youth with specific perspectives, we are intentional about helping them identify with the idea of social change, however it manifests. When a Brotherhood /Sister Sol member becomes a productive member of his or her community, when he or she gives back to the community through service or activism, each degree of social participation is valid and necessary, and each has the potential to positively effect social change. Perhaps the most lasting effect of our rites-of-passage experience is that it fosters deep and ongoing self-reflection in which young people see themselves (as we all are) as works in progress. This perspective promotes ongoing and critical analysis of the self and of the larger environment, as well as the skills these young people need to apply their developing values.

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## About the Authors

Jason Warwin and Khary Lazarre-White are co-founders and co-directors of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol, creating the seeds of the program while seniors at Brown University and bringing it to New York City in 1995. Susan Wilcox, Ed.D., is a former co-director and current educational consultant of the organization, focusing on program, curriculum, and staff development. The authors' work has been recognized with the Long Walk to Freedom Award for continuing the work of 1960s civil rights activists, the Union Square Award from the Fund for the City of New York, and the Harlem Renaissance Award from the Abyssinian Development Corporation.

## Studio in a School

For over 26 years, STUDIO IN A SCHOOL has enriched the lives of New York City's children with the creativity of the visual arts. Collaborating with teachers, STUDIO's professional artists integrate enriching art-making experiences with the academic curriculum. STUDIO works in public schools, childcare centers, and community organizations to help over 25,000 children each year discover their creativity through drawing, painting, printmaking, and sculpture.

STUDIO focuses exclusively on the visual arts: drawing, painting, printmaking, collage, sculpture and puppetry. This commitment has enabled the organization to develop a distinguished expertise in the field of arts education. Hundreds of thousands of children have experienced the excitement of looking, creating, and reflecting on their artwork as it relates to the world around them. STUDIO is proud to help children develop an awareness

of their creative potential and to enable them to boost their self-confidence through the artistic process.

Some highlights:

- STUDIO hires only professional artists to teach in its programs. Professional artists are well suited for teaching art, not only because they have extensive knowledge of the history and culture of art and strong technical skills, but also because they are able to model an artist's way of thinking and working.
- STUDIO programs are based on partnerships with teachers, students, administrators and caregivers. STUDIO believes that training, supporting and collaborating with those adults who help shape young people's lives is a key component of making art an integral part of education.

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